

Barrington Committee on Appropriations

Meeting Minutes

March 5, 2014

Opening

The regular meeting of the Barrington Committee on Appropriations was called to order at 7:00 p.m. on March 5, 2014 in the School Committee Room in Town Hall by Tim Sweetser.

Present

Tim Sweetser, Geoff Grove, Peter Clifford, Joel Hellmann, Chad Mollica; also Kate Brody, School Committee Chair; Ron Tarro, Barrington Schools Finance Director; Mike Messore, Superintendent of Schools; and Ann Strong, Town Council Liaison.

Approval of Agenda

The agenda was unanimously approved as distributed.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the 2/10/14 meeting were accepted by unanimous vote. The minutes of the 2/24/14 meeting were amended by Joel Hellmann and then accepted by unanimous vote.

Open Issues

Joel led the discussion on the budget as follows:

Surplus in last year's budget: \$728k appears in this year's audit. Ron Tarro explained this is comprised of \$526,000 expenditures and \$262,000 revenue. Part of this is because Governor Chafee accelerated state aid.

Contracts: Joel stated that there would be an increase of \$635,000. Ron indicated that this was a projection and that number had since changed. The reduction would be about \$325,000. Joel confirmed that this includes both certified and non-certified staff. Joel asked for clarification on salary costs for All Day K. Ron indicated that the number he was using included benefits and salaries. He clarified that all salaries: \$298,000 and all benefits: \$166,462. Joel questioned the expense differential in this year's budget. Ron explained that two teachers retired: A tech support instructor at elementary level (\$88,000 including salary, longevity, benefits) and an \$82,000 per year 8th grade teacher. Other changes to save salary dollars were also made including changes to custodian overtime pay calculation and intern pay. Additionally, after the contract was passed and retirements came in, the schools filled five positions at salaries lower than was budgeted.

There was a 7.74% pension contribution increase. Chad pointed out that we pay exactly what the state mandates, and expressed concern that this amount is inadequate.

Joel questioned why projected enrollment by the school department was higher than that of NESDEC. Ron reviewed enrollment numbers for each elementary school. A debate ensued on what numbers to follow. Mike explained the expenses associated with Common Core including the use of online materials rather than print. He also spoke to other curriculum introductions. Geoff asked if the PARCC assessment will cost more than the current NECAP testing. Mike responded saying “No, it will cost about the same.” He noted that the acquisition of computers serves both to meet the requirements of PARCC testing and also to support the curriculum.

Joel asked about accelerated state aid that the town has been receiving and how this would impact the budget with regard to declining enrollment in future years. Ron said that we would not be punished for this when accelerated aid ends. Tim said that five year projections are like throwing darts at a dart board.

Chad presented an analysis of staff pay including overtime. His analysis showed that about 7% of staff received overtime (OT). OT is now calculated on hours actually worked in excess of 40 in a week – NOT hours worked over 8 in a day as was previously done. Ron indicated that the OT column would hopefully be reduced each year going forward because of contract changes. Chad followed with a question about pay/other remuneration. Ron explained that this could encompass coaching, club advisor, etc. It also includes other items like substitute teachers, bus monitors, department head, coaches who don't teach in the district, and other situations. This pay is typically not subject to pension compensation calculation.

A short discussion ensued about regular wages and total gross. Some of the lower value numbers, Ron explained, were substitutes who only worked one or two days. Mike explained that the school department was now trying to utilize interns as substitutes because it is more cost effective but, more importantly, so students would not lose a day of instruction because interns are familiar with the curriculum.

Peter wants to compare the actual expenses of previous years to the proposed budget, but found it difficult to get the numbers. He indicated that there are so many numbers out there that it's difficult to solidify what is real. He provided a spreadsheet to Ron and asked that he show how the numbers are generated. Ron will do so and return the spreadsheet via the Town Clerk.

Joel resumed his questioning asking about federal money. He asked if any of that money is being used for FTE's that are shown in other parts of the budget. Ron indicated that

the school department funded three positions (two teachers and one clerical support) through IDEA. Title I funding pays for one position (reading specialist).

Joel returned conversation to state aid asking Ron and Mike if they have any indication that the formula might change. They said they are pretty active across the state in various organizations and they have not heard anything. However, there are no guarantees.

Chad asked about unfunded OPEB (Other Post-Employment Benefits). Ron explained that FY2016 will be the first year that will be reflected in the budget. It's something that the Auditor General and General Treasurer's Office will be working out the details for in the coming months. The town has been working to reduce their liability through contract negotiations. The number will continue to drop. At that, discussion ended and Tim adjourned the meeting.

Agenda for Next Meeting

List the items to be discussed at the next meeting.

Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned at 8:23 p.m. by Tim Sweetser. The next general meeting will be at 7:00 p.m. on March 11, 2014, in the Library.

Minutes submitted by: Geoff Grove (with thanks to Ann Strong for taking the minutes)

Approved by: [Name]